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## EDITORIAL COMMENT



THE meeting of the Associated Alumnae this month should be the most interesting and important one yet held. With a largely augmented membership, a record of important and successful work, and increased public-spirit and enthusiasm among nurses, the meetings should be delightful and inspiring.

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THE winter just passed has truly been an epoch-making time in the history of trained nursing, and not only has the specific cause of higher professional education been strengthened and advanced perceptibly by the success of the nurses' registration bills, but the whole larger problem of the gradual rise of all women to a position of economic and educational dignity is brought nearer solution by the definite bit of progress so courageously attempted and so happily won by the members of the nursing profession—now, indeed, a profession not only in our hopes and aspirations, but in law and in fact. During the past six months the organized nurses of five States have, on their first attempt, framed and carried through the Legislatures laws designed to affect wholesomely the education of the nurse by regulating her practice. It was a triumphant success, and peculiarly our own, led by our own generals and reinforced sturdily by nurses of the rank and file. True, many splendid men, physicians and laymen, gave strong support and distinguished themselves anew in broadmindedness and magnanimity, yet no less was it strikingly demonstrated that the nurses held a strong hand simply in being what they were.

In the midst of rejoicings the news of the veto of Governor Yates, of Illinois, came as a severe disappointment. His reasons are feeble and show him to have been entirely unmindful, in this instance, of the public good. However, there is no cause for discouragement, for he cannot be regarded but as a temporary obstacle. Western women are not easily defeated, and the prominent members of the medical profession in Illinois have given their firm support to the nurses. We are strongly inclined to suspect (though this has not been corroborated by the Governor) that a certain "short-time" nursing-school in Chicago of dazzling and many-titled faculty may have dictated this veto. However, we would not wish to do any of them an injustice.

It is much to be hoped that when the Illinois nurses make their next attempt they will insist on having an Examining Board composed entirely of nominees of their own selection. This, in Virginia and New York, has been secured, and constitutes their chief feature and one which is quite new in nursing registration. In no other country, not even in New Zealand, has such a possibility been suggested. This unabridged power of nomination by the organized nurses of the State was the keynote steadfastly held by the nurses of these States. It was a protest against commercialism in nursing education and against the entrance of party politics in nursing affairs. That it was accepted as a principle and not disapproved by the medical profession as a whole (in those States) cannot be doubted, for it would be absurd to suppose that such a provision could

have been won against a determined opposition from the majority of the solid men in medicine.

That this full right of nomination should be construed as an expression of disloyalty from nurses to their chiefs is merely the malicious construction of small minds. Organized nurses have within their ranks many members, both men and women, who have studied medicine and stand high in medical practice. No doubt such doubly qualified examiners will be found on Examining Boards. The point is, not that the State societies are opposed to medical examiners, but that they mean to resist with all their power the influence of "politics" in having examiners presented to them from possibly "interested" sources.

The educational aspect of the four bills is of extreme interest and should be carefully studied by all nurses. They show vividly the status of general public intelligence in the different States, and various marks of battle are to be seen. Virginia and New York are much alike, although to the uninitiated little seems to be specified in the New York bill. But the powers and functions of the Regents make it unnecessary to mention details. No other State is so favorably situated as New York in having this body of guardians of education. No other Examining Board will be similarly sustained and protected. The simple sentence, "anyone . . . having a diploma from a school for nurses connected with a hospital or sanitarium giving a course of at least two years, and registered by the Regents of the University of the State of New York as maintaining in this and other respects proper standards, all of which shall be determined by the said Regents," covers it all. Academic and professional schools and other institutions are registered by the Regents on evidence that suitable provision has been made for buildings, furniture, educational equipment, and proper maintenance. Similar investigations will be made of training-schools for nurses.

The North Carolina and New Jersey bills are, it must be admitted, sadly small and weak. They can, in truth, only be regarded as entering-wedges, and the process of construction will doubtless be slow and arduous. The North Carolina bill does not venture to fix a minimum period of training after January, 1904, so that presumably, as the bill now stands, a woman with ten weeks' teaching might present herself for examination. We think we detect the cloven hoof here. However, it secures an Examining Board and specifies the subjects which the candidate must pass. Two medical men sit upon the board. It is devoutly to be hoped that they will never be of the small private sanitarium element which at present is without other than mercenary standards where nursing is concerned.

The New Jersey bill alone among the four shows no Examining Board, confers no title, and does not recognize the State Nurses' Association. It has, practically, no educational features save the two-year limit. But it did secure that, and in so doing gained a victory greater proportionately than other States did with better bills, for New Jersey is afflicted with a most pernicious and pervasive enemy in the Philadelphia "Short-Term Nursing Course" (or some similar name). No other State found its movement for registration so bitterly and so formidably opposed.

New Jersey young women are evidently counted on as dupes for this so-called school, which has the effrontery to claim special privileges in exploiting the poor as well as the credulous probationer. Through the influence of this corporation the New Jersey press not only gave the nurses no support, but vilified their movement (for which we predict they will soon be sorry). The Philadelphia

papers also gave columns to abuse of the nurses and to glorification of a ten weeks' course in which the pupils are supposed to practise on the poor, and the nurses' statements of their position were returned as "not wanted." The *Philadelphia Medical Journal* alone supported the bill.

The medical profession in New Jersey was silenced, and although the State society had previously endorsed the Nurses' Bill, a member of its Legislative Committee lobbied in opposition and circulated pamphlets lauding "short courses" and advising the Legislature to defeat the Nurses' Bill.

None of the rest of us encountered such trials, for it is well known that for dense self-sufficiency, for determinedness in ignorancy, and for the real thing in intolercancy, none equals the amateur philanthropist in his philanthropy.

A delightful study was that of the different Legislatures. Most courteous and brotherly was the attitude shown by these practical men of affairs to the nurses. Of course, here and there one was cross and ill-tempered, but that was nothing. They showed a vast capacity for grasping the essential points of the nurses' case and a genuine interest in the educational side of it. A blunt sense of justice was noticeable, as when one Assemblyman rose and said, "We have given the doctors and dentists what they want, now let us give the nurses what they want, and do not let us give them something they don't want." A streak too of quaint chivalry cropped out, as when a Southern legislator who had been in opposition announced on the floor, "I have met the enemy and I am theirs." There were also glimpses of party politics,—but that is a different story.

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GRATIFYING as the results are, let us not indulge in undue elation. The real mountain is before us; these were but the foothills.

The selection of Examining Boards, the conduct of all the detail work, the unremitting attention which someone must give the maintenance of a defensive attitude against those who will assuredly attack our hard-won position and against the efforts which will surely be made to nullify or break down our laws, all this will require earnest, unceasing work on the part of our State societies. It is a part of democracy, the price we pay for being free.

We have not the slightest doubt that Examining Boards of the highest character and purest purpose will easily be found. Let no one be intimidated by the cry of hostile elements if some well-known names appear and reappear on them. In every group of people there is a small circle distinguished by their willingness to drudge and toil for disinterested reasons. In churches, in reform work, in civics, in the professions, there are always some people who seem to be doing everything. It is because they are willing to take the trouble.

Now that our winter's work is done, one must wonder if we could possibly have secured the three-years' course limit.

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THE Illinois State Association did one thing that ought to be done by all,—it made up a complete census of all the hospitals with and without training-schools in the State, with a full set of data regarding the kind and length of service, size of hospital and school, etc., etc. This census showed that there are still many schools with a two-years' course, though they are not connected with the best-known hospitals. This census-making, which was suggested some time since as work for the Associated Alumnae, should be thoroughly done by the State societies.

SOME of these inquiries into training-schools would make it appear that the Superintendents' Society still has work to do in the matter of a uniform curriculum. Some of the obstacles encountered by the nurses could have been more easily overthrown if all of the recognized schools had been more up to the mark in their curricula. The Superintendents' Society, which seems to have been resting on its oars lately, no doubt will attack this problem with its old-time enthusiasm.

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THE rules and regulations under which the nurses of the different States shall set about securing their State recognition and titles will vary somewhat in the four States. All these rules will appear in *THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF NURSING* as they are announced, and will also be published, as the laws require, in the public press.

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Two recent events bear directly on the problem of education which we are attacking through legislation. One is the welcome announcement that through the efforts of the Philadelphia superintendents the Drexel Institute of that city is opening an admirable preparatory course. Full details will be given in a later number.

The other, not so agreeable, was an unpleasantly dramatic occurrence in one of the important hospitals of San Francisco, which, heralded rather sensationally in the press, proves, in official documents and hospital history for a long period, most emphatically the well-worn axiom that only a woman can discipline women, and that whenever men attempt it the failure is dismal; personal favoritism, truckling and indulgence, low standards of ethics, prevail under their control, and a negligence of patients that makes the true nurse weep. The whole story could not be told in a few lines, but the lesson of it, which the authorities would do well to take to heart, is that the woman at the head of a school should not be placed in a position of entire subordination to a hospital superintendent, who might possibly see in his position only a chance for petty tyranny, but should have the entire control of her school under a committee of the governing board. This committee should be selected for its intelligence in educational things. Then, if the superintendent were not acceptable, she could be removed by dignified methods, not by means as clumsy as they were unmanly.

